

# Environmental Justice & the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency



June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
Ned Brooks & Karen Solas



Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

# Overview

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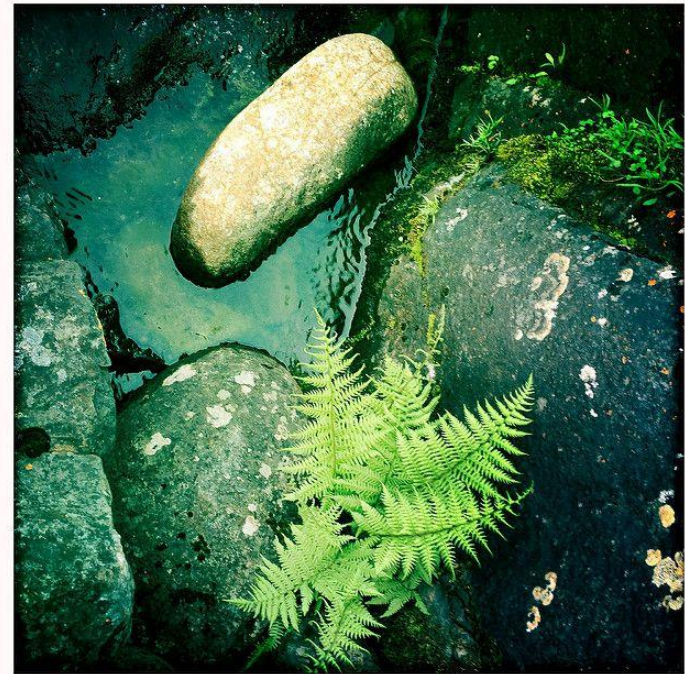
- What is the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)?
- What is “environmental justice”?
- Our process to address environmental justice
  - Normalize
  - Organize
  - Operationalize
- Lessons learned



# Minnesota Pollution Control Agency – what we do

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- ❑ State government agency responsible for protecting the environment and health
- ❑ In partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, local government, and tribal governments



# We do this by:

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- ❑ Measuring pollution in the air, water, and land
- ❑ Cleaning up polluted land and water
- ❑ Regulating pollution sources
- ❑ Encouraging individuals and businesses to prevent or minimize pollution





# Challenges-what we don't/can't do

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- ❑ Regulate all pollution sources, such as vehicles, water use, agricultural runoff
- ❑ Decide where facilities and roads are located
- ❑ Force facilities to close or move if they are meeting state and federal requirements



# What is “environmental justice”?

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## Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) & Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)

Environmental Justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.



# What environmental justice does NOT mean to us:

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- ❑ Environmental issues that you feel are not being adequately addressed that are NOT having disproportionate impacts on vulnerable communities



# MPCA's process

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- ☐ Normalize
- ☐ Organize
- ☐ Operationalize





# Normalize

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- ❑ Shared understanding, common definitions
- ❑ Getting comfortable with the uncomfortable





# EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY



In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally.



In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.



In the third image, all three can see the game without any supports or accommodations because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.





# Environmental Justice at MPCA

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- ❑ All Minnesotans can participate in decisions that affect their environment and health
  - People can influence the decision
  - Everyone's concerns are considered



# Environmental Justice at MPCA

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- All people benefit from equal levels of environmental protection and service
  - Pollution does not harm one group of people more than another
  - Protecting Minnesotans most at risk

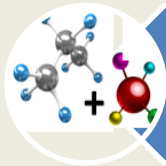


# Elements of Cumulative Impact Analysis



## Sensitivity

- Standards based on sensitive life stages



## Additivity

- Multiple contaminants with similar effects



## Multiple Pathways

- Total exposure via drinking, eating, swimming...



## Multiple Sources

- Added effects of cars, factories, runoff...



## Non-Chemical Stressors

- Impacts from noise, traffic, aesthetics ...



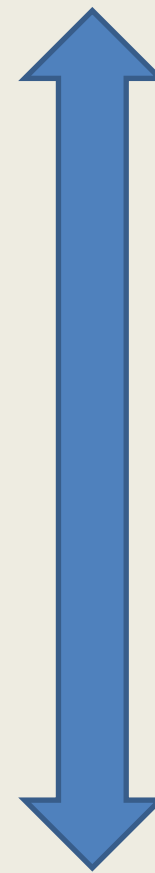
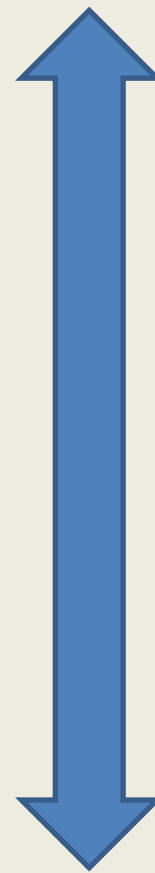
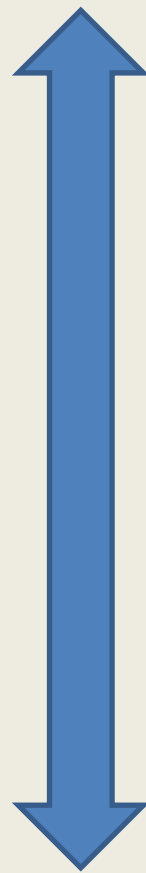
## Community Vulnerability

- Greater susceptibility to pollution due to health care, housing, other challenges

## Quantitative

Analysis Methods, Data  
**More Available**

**MPCA Can Compel**  
Action to Address



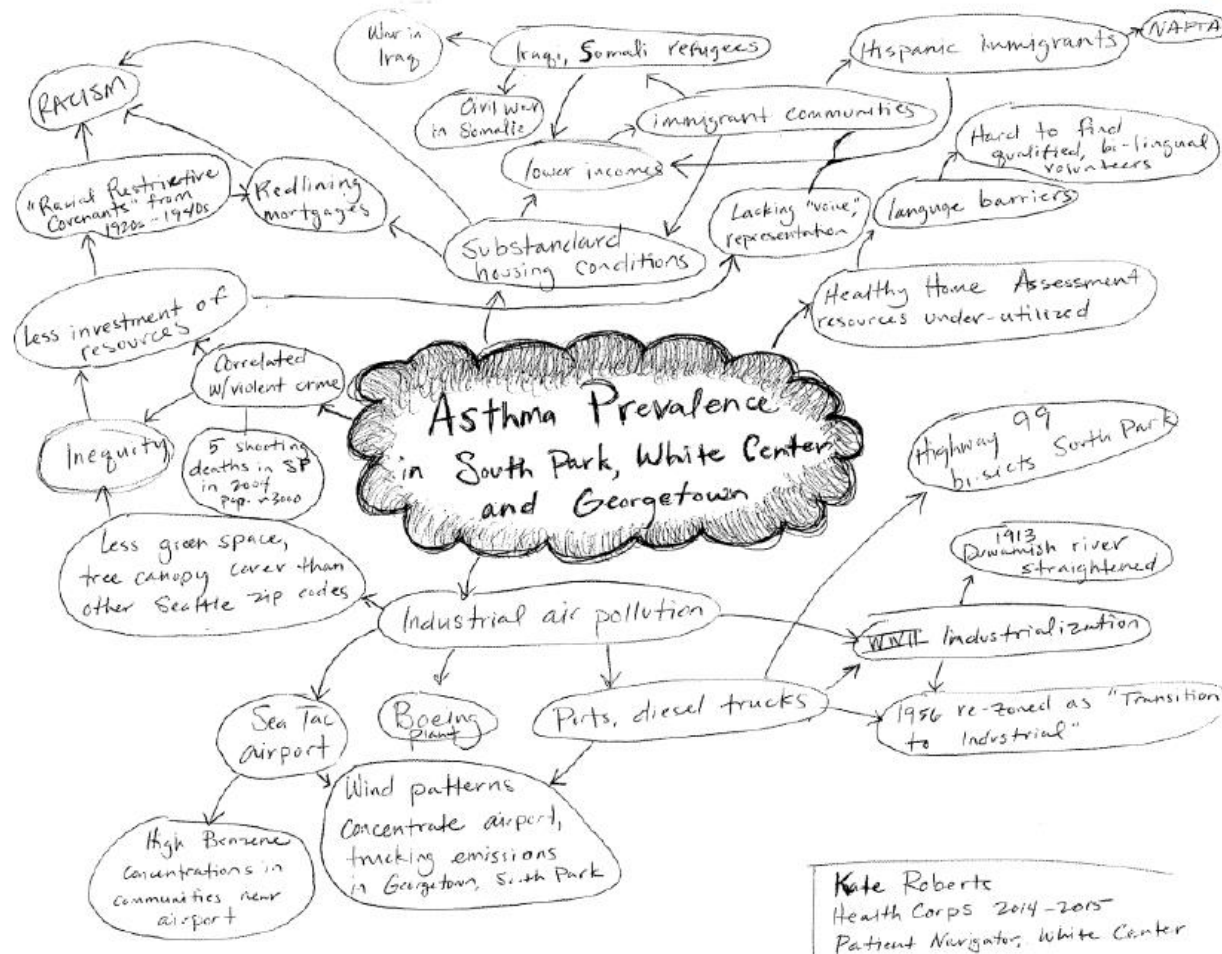
## Qualitative

Analysis Methods, Data  
**Less Available**

**MPCA Can Influence**







Causes of the Causes Diagramming: Asthma Prevalence in South Park, White Center, and Georgetown, Washington. Community Action for Clean Air- EPA Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem Solving Grant

“I consider it my job to start the uncomfortable conversations.”

– John Linc Stine, MPCA Commissioner



“I consider it my job to start the uncomfortable conversations.”

- John Linc Stine, MPCA Commissioner

However...

❑ Change takes place on the ground

– Create advocates and teams throughout agency/organization



# Organize

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- ❑ Framework
- ❑ Build organizational capacity
- ❑ Build community relationships



# Environmental Justice at MPCA

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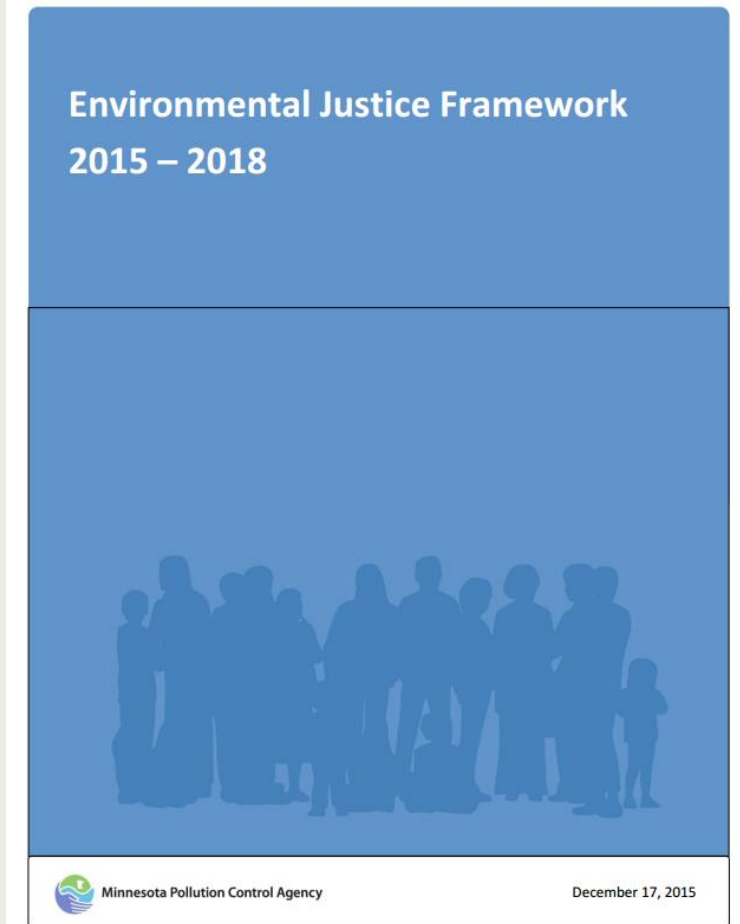
- ❑ Started work in early 1990s
- ❑ Renewed commitment in 2012
  - Increased national, local attention/concern
  - Minnesota government-wide efforts to reduce disparities
  - Strategic plan goal
- ❑ MPCA Environmental Justice Steering Team
  - Commissioner's Office, Division Directors
- ❑ 2 full-time staff



# MPCA's Environmental Justice Framework

[www.pca.state.mn.us/ej](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/ej)

- ❑ Our plan for reaching strategic plan goals
- ❑ Developed during 2014 with stakeholder input
- ❑ Public meetings in 2015
- ❑ Public comment period
- ❑ Completed December 2015





# Main framework approaches

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- ❑ Identify areas where lower income Minnesotans, people of color and others may be experiencing more harm
- ❑ Change our approach and increase our work in these areas:
  - Better understand sources of pollution and risks
  - Reduce pollution, improve livability
  - Communicate more and better



# Operationalize

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- ❑ Identifying areas of concern
- ❑ Integrating environmental justice principles into all our work
- ❑ Enhanced engagement
- ❑ Partnerships
  - Community
  - Government

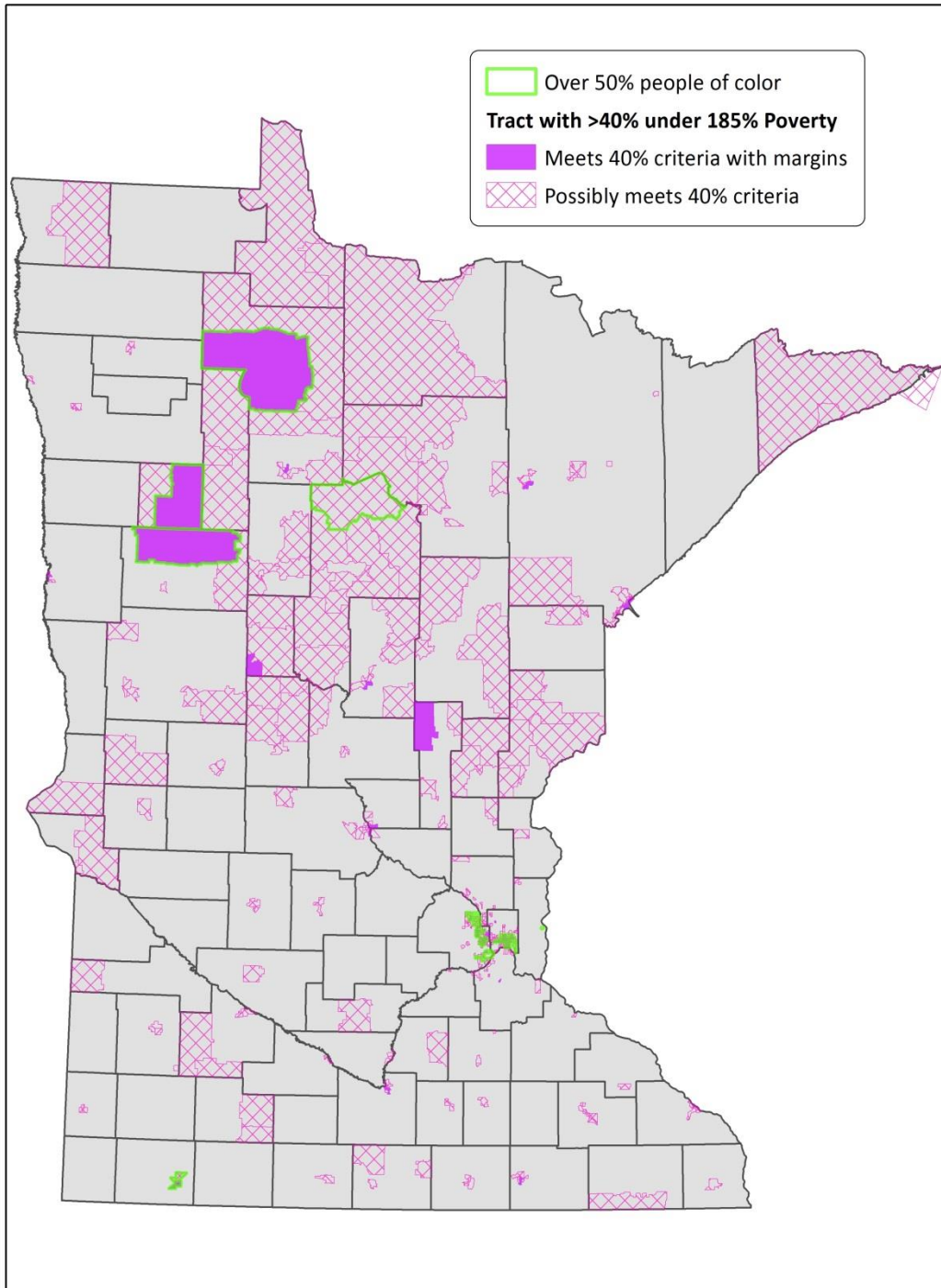


# Identifying areas of potential concern

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- ❑ Who lives in the area?
  - Preliminary screening: information on household income and race
  - Gather community knowledge
  - Additional information: languages spoken, age, education
- ❑ What pollution burdens are nearby?
  - High traffic corridors
  - Pollution sources, water and contaminated land/soil
  - Predicted risks from air pollution
- ❑ Other information sources:
  - US EPA mapping tool EJSCREEN
  - MN Department of Health data
  - Metropolitan Council's Data & Maps





## Initial screening to identify areas that meet demographic criteria

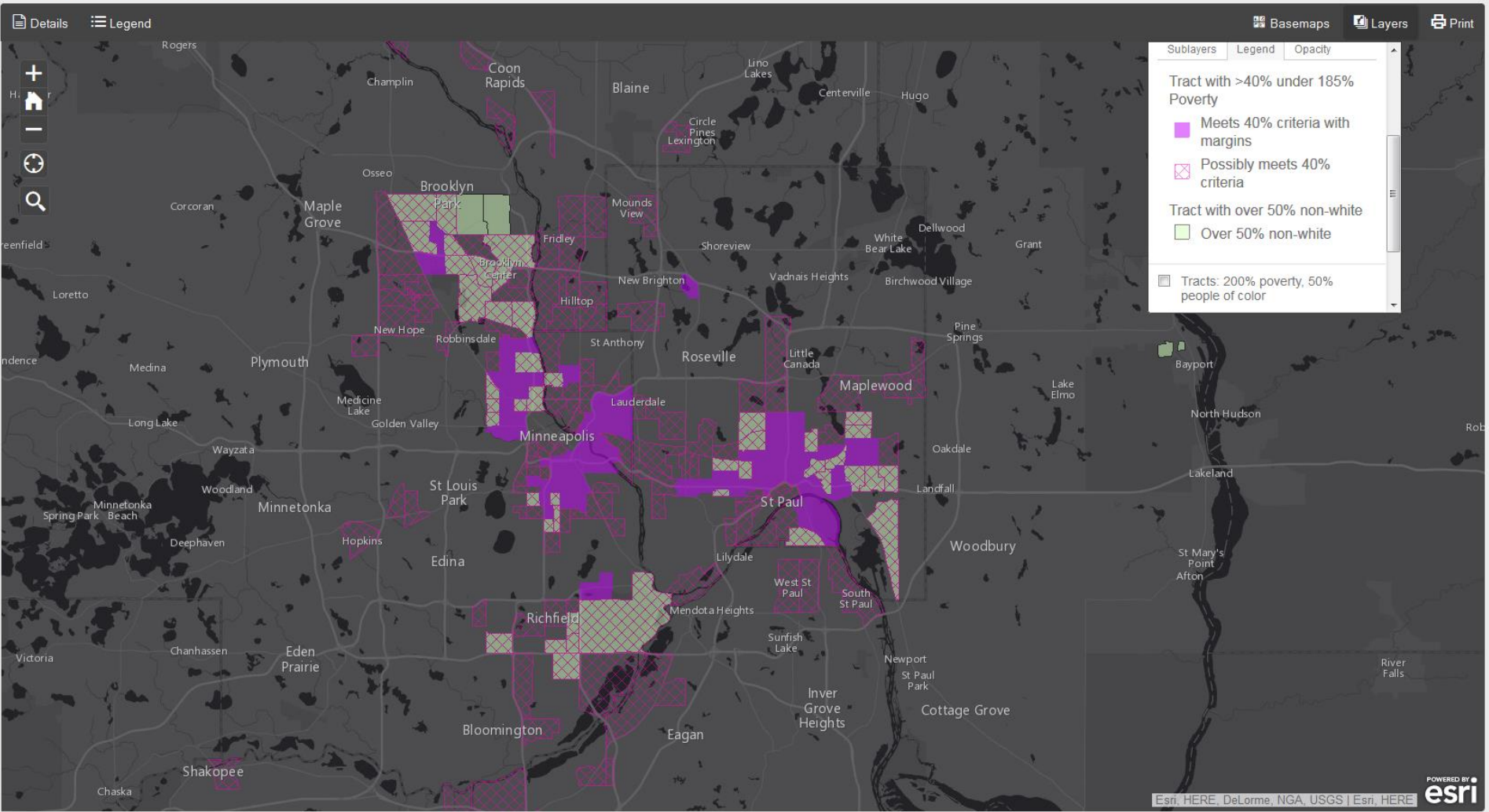
- 40% or more people with household income less than 185% of federal poverty level
- 50% or more people of color

Most commonly found in:

- Twin Cities
- Northern half of Minnesota.

Supplemental information on pollution burdens, languages, etc.

# Census and environmental data viewer



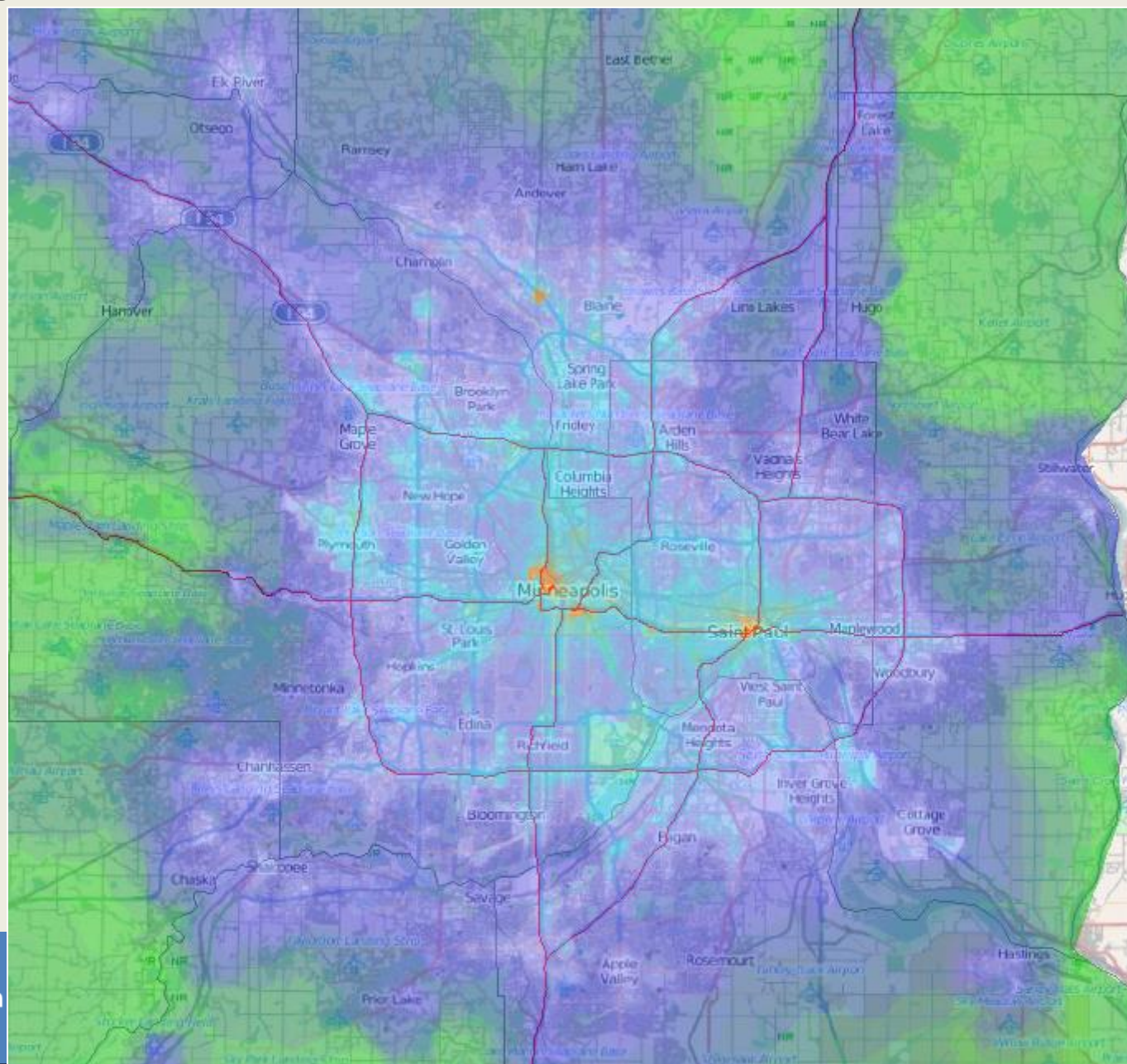
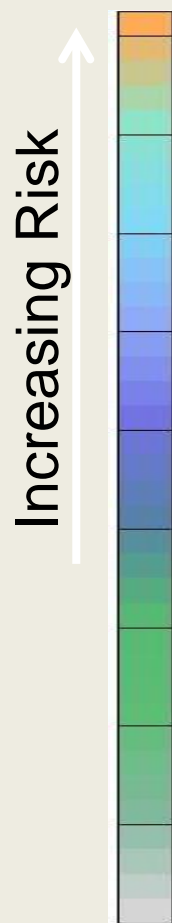


The screenshot shows a web map application with a map of the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. The map displays various city boundaries and names, including Minneapolis, St. Paul, and surrounding areas. A legend on the right side of the map indicates that the map shows 'MPCA Sites' and 'Tracts: 185% poverty, 50% people of color'. The map is overlaid with a grid of colored polygons representing these tracts. The map is powered by Esri, HERE, DeLorme, NGA, USGS, and Esri, HERE.



# MODELED NON-CANCER RISK

All Sources



Minnesota Pollution

# Modifying our approach in EJ areas

## ❑ Public participation, outreach & engagement

- Early & often, alternate news sources, plain language, translate, etc.

## ❑ Prevention & assistance

- Grants
- Education & assistance
- Programs like MN

GreenCorps, GreenStep  
Cities



# Modifying our approach in EJ areas

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- ❑ Monitoring
- ❑ Regulating pollution sources
  - Permitting
  - Inspections
- ❑ Rule-making & policy development



# Environmental justice review

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1. Identification of potentially affected communities
2. Impacts assessment
3. Opportunities for action
4. Engagement
5. Evaluation



# Environmental justice review

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Great examples already exist!

- City of Seattle Race & Social Justice Initiative's Racial Equity Toolkit
- King County's Equity Impact Review Process
- Government Alliance on Race & Equity's Racial Equity Toolkit
- Equitable Development Principles & Scorecard



# Partnerships

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## ☐ Community

- Environmental Justice Advisory Group
- Neighborhood, orgs, nonprofits, individuals

## ☐ Government

- Other state agencies, cities, counties, etc.
- Elected officials





# Lessons learned

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- ❑ Learn from others
- ❑ Relationships, relationships, relationships
- ❑ The best laid plans...
- ❑ Adjust concepts of satisfaction and success
- ❑ State of constant learning



“When I go to community meetings, I feel like I need to prove that I’m smart, and I assume that I’m trustworthy. Community members want me to prove that I’m trustworthy, and they assume I’m smart.”

– Kristie Ellickson, MPCA Risk Assessor



What I hear when  
I'm being yelled at  
is people caring  
loudly at me.

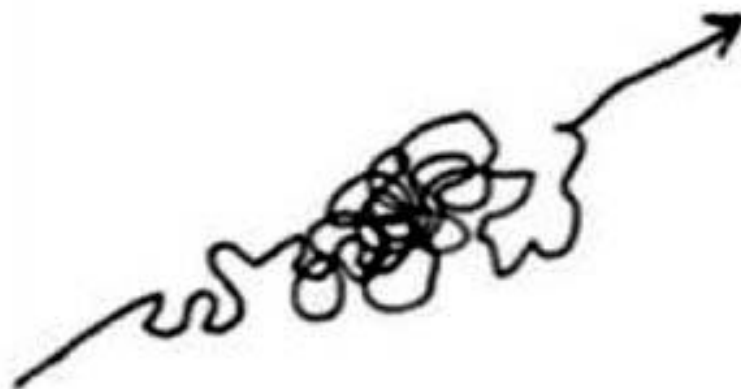


Success



what people think  
it looks like

Success



what it really  
looks like

(Babs Rangaiah)



Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

# Questions?

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